



Frank Kinney Park

WORKSHOP #2 MEETING REPORT February 27, 2003

Workshop time: 7:00 to 9:00pm

Workshop location: Parker Elementary School cafeteria, 3875 Kincaid, Eugene

Workshop facilitator: Robin Hostick

Other elected officials and City staff present: Emily Proudfoot

BACKGROUND

City of Eugene Parks Planning staff hosted the second neighborhood workshop to discuss possible improvements to Frank Kinney Park. Improvements to the park are funded by the Parks and Open Space bond measure passed in 1998 by area residents. The workshop included a brief review of the first workshop, as well as some preliminary results from a neighborhood survey (see survey report). This was followed by a presentation of the draft concept plan and a general discussion of issues and ideas relating to park improvements. Goals for the evening included 1) getting feedback on the draft concept plan, and; 2) setting priorities for park improvements.

ADVERTISEMENT

Advertisement for workshop #1 included the following:

- A letter invitation, including a postage-paid survey form, was mailed on February 7th to about 825 southeast Eugene-area residents within approximately 1/2 mile of the park
- Invitations were mailed to several other interested parties and stakeholders
- An article on the event was included in the February 20th issue of the Council Newsletter
- A news release was distributed on February 20th
- The workshop was included on the City Manager's Office public meetings calendar
- The workshop was included on the Parks and Open Space online schedule of events
- The workshop was announced in the City/Region section of the Register Guard preceding the event

PRESENTATION

Meeting participants convened at the Parker Elementary School cafeteria. A brief introduction was given about the Parks and Open Space bond program and the role of Parks Planning in the development of POS projects over the next few years. Reference was made to other acquisitions and projects in or near the southeast Eugene area.

The planning process was outlined briefly. The schedule was given for park construction in the spring and summer of 2004. The results of the previous workshop were described, as well as some preliminary results from a neighborhood-wide mail-in survey (see survey report). Briefly, the survey results showed a nearly even split between neighbors who supported the concept plan, or wanted to see more done, and neighbors who supported a lower level of development or no changes. Several quotes were read from all points of view.

The draft concept plan was explained. The existing features were described, including the woodland and native meadow areas, the Rexius Trail, street access, etc. The intent of the concept plan as a very low-impact vision was described, including preservation and restoration of virtually all areas of native habitat contained in the park, the rationale for locating the playground in an area unoccupied by native prairie species and near the natural entrance to the park, the intent of providing disabled accessibility to allow residents of all ability levels to enjoy the park, the addition of native trees, and the preservation/enhancement of the Rexius Trail.

DISCUSSION

A total of 12 neighbors attended the workshop, several of which arrived after the presentation to attend the discussion portion. Of the attendees, two had attended the previous workshop.

Most neighbors who attended the workshop appeared to favor an even lower-impact design than that proposed by the draft concept plan. Much of the discussion revolved around potential impacts to the immediate neighborhood, including concerns of traffic and parking impacts on Martin Street, increased noise from park users, trash, and safety.

Some participants expressed concern about the use of concrete for durable surface and ADA accessible paths. The main reason given for this concern was that concrete is not seen as compatible with the “natural feel” of the park, that it is aesthetically unappealing, consumes resources, and not as enjoyable to walk on as an organic surface. Staff explained several reasons for the use of concrete in park settings, including relatively low cost, long-term durability, inert ingredients (as opposed to asphalt or other oil-based path treatments), and low maintenance (no need for weed control, surface repair, etc.). Other materials, such as decomposed granite, stabilized aggregate, gravel, wood chips, etc., provide much less accessible surfaces and require higher levels of maintenance. Given the city-wide concerns about park maintenance (increase in number of parks w/out significant increase in maintenance funding), staff have strived to ensure that park improvements are designed to require minimal levels of maintenance. Given this, staff agreed to continue exploring alternatives to concrete in this application. It also became clear that the primary objection among the participants to the use of concrete was the proposed stretch of path east of the Amazon channel, between the large meadow area and the edge of the existing woodland. This particular stretch of path was seen by participants as representing the essence of the “natural” experience in the park.

A few concerns about negative use were put forth, mostly around evidence of broken beer bottles, graffiti, and the presence of “unsupervised” teenagers. Some suggested that any development would attract more negative use. Staff explained that in virtually all recent neighborhood park projects, improving access and providing park amenities has increased the amount of positive, legitimate use. This has the direct effect of displacing many negative uses through several means,

including identifying publicly owned and actively managed property, generating more contact between neighbors that strengthens the community, providing for more natural observation of the park, etc. Principles of CPTED (Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design) were also briefly explained, and how they are applied to park designs to make them as safe and friendly as possible.

Access was a central issue in many comments. Some participants pointed out that safe access around the park is not available, particularly for strollers. It was suggested that safe access around the perimeter of the park, i.e. through small, curb-tight sidewalks, would help address this issue, as well as providing ADA access through the park if the sidewalks were connected across the bridge.

Many comments reflected the fact that the Rexius Trail is a heavily used and very popular amenity in the park, but that it is currently in poor repair both inside and outside of the park. Participants generally agreed that repair of the trail, including reconstructing the trail bed and adding drainage, would be a good use of funding. It was also suggested that, if money was available, the trail could be improved or reconstructed as far north as Snell. Staff agreed to consider the option while clarifying that current funding was specifically allocated for improvements within Frank Kinney Park, and that decisions about the use of any potential remaining funding following improvements (whatever they may be) would involve a different process.

Some participants expressed concerns about the bridge, and that the location would detract from the experience of Amazon Creek. Other participants suggested that other locations along Amazon Creek, outside of the park area, would be better. It was explained that previous comments suggested that the deep creek channel divided the park and the neighborhood, and that a crossing would be desirable. Evidence suggests that, among several locations within the park, the proposed location is most frequently used to cross the creek, and would be able to be spanned by a small, pedestrian bridge with the least impact. It was also explained that providing a bridge crossing would better manage human use of the creek area and reduce impacts such as erosion and de-vegetation of banks.

The attendees also clearly supported preservation and restoration of natural areas. Several aspects were discussed, including the need to remove invasive species, providing bird habitat, and support for the late-mow management of native meadows. Some concern was voiced that new trees would shade the meadows too much, would shade adjacent residences, would detract from the open feel of the meadow areas, or would create hiding places for criminals. Staff briefly discussed principles of CPTED and pointed out that park trees would provide little cover for illicit activity, particularly in comparison to existing stands of mature forest. Other opinions were more supportive of native trees to soften the edges, define the park, provide habitat, etc. It was suggested that smaller tree species could be used to achieve the desired effect.

Some opinions were adamant about excluding a playground from the concept plan, primarily citing unwanted impacts to the natural feel of the park, attracting “outside” use, and the availability of other nearby playgrounds (Fox Hollow School, Pearl Buck). Staff clarified that the adjacent playgrounds are either private (Pearl Buck), or part of school property. In addition, use of the playgrounds is restricted to certain times of the day, and they are removed from a large portion of

the neighborhood served by the park by significant physical barriers, including steep slopes, rocky trails, and private property.

Furthermore, staff pointed out that the concept plan assigns the vast majority of the park area to the exclusive protection and management of natural areas (the actual percentage of natural areas in the draft concept plan is approximately 97%; “developed” areas include approximately 3% of the site). It was also explained that, based on the preliminary survey results, it appeared that nearly half of the survey respondents were in favor of providing all or more of the amenities shown on the draft concept plan. It was evident that this opinion was not represented at the workshop, and staff clarified that arriving at a representative consensus without the presence of participants expressing this point of view would be difficult. Staff agreed, however, to address the specific concerns put forward by the participant group.

The following is a general list of comments and ideas presented by participants during the workshop.

General

- Negative use (broken bottles)
- Unsafe area for playground
 - hang out for unsupervised teens
 - Dogs!
- Phased approach
- Move PG to other place on Amazon Parkway?
- Anyone in favor of playground? No
- No bikes
- Maintenance! Trails, other
- Reconstruct Rexius Trail - also in other areas

Access

- Runners won't like concrete
- Concentrate access in SE corner
- Bridge - impacts space by creek
- Maybe a paved perimeter
- Need safe walking areas (w/stroller, etc.)
- Brings people in from “outside” - Parking an issue on Martin
- Sidewalk around perimeter
- Concrete: no!
- Bridge at Larch/Amazon? Or at 36th/Amazon?
- Martin Street sidewalk is important

Natural Areas

- Want “wilderness” experience
- Birds fewer (blackberries gone)
- Trees block sun
- Protection for meadow - visual demarcation?
- SE Neighbors board: Habitat and water quality high priorities

FINDINGS

Discussions during the workshop were helpful in providing more specific information about neighbor's concerns around park improvements. Although a general comparison to preliminary survey results suggested that a significant percentage of survey respondents may not have been represented at the workshop, the discussions nevertheless underscore a need to carefully reexamine the draft concept plan.

Further research is recommended, including a thorough review and analysis of the neighborhood survey, consideration of the discussion points from this workshop, further understanding of the amount, type and distribution of current park services provided in the south Amazon area, review of currently adopted planning documents, and review of current demographic statistics for the neighborhood (if available). Research results should influence a revision of the draft concept plan to be presented back to the neighborhood.

CLOSING

Attendees were thanked for their participation. Staff assured participants that another round of design revisions will occur, and that they would be notified of the time and place for presentation of the results. Participants or other interested parties are welcome to discuss the project or submit comments at any time via phone, email or delivered mail.

ATTENDEES:

The following parties attended the workshop:

Susan Robertson
Michael Garcia
Brett Jacobs
Stephanie Schroeder
Margaret Robertson
G. Pasnick
M. Levine
Ursula Lindqvist
Ken Blanchard
Susan Stewart
Tim Burkhart
Zane Cornett

COMMENTS SHEETS

The following comments were recorded on comment sheets provided at the workshop and turned in to City staff at the end of the event.

Total comment sheets handed in at meeting: 2

Total comment sheets returned via post (or otherwise delivered) following the meeting: 2

1. *Do you feel the proposed concept plan fulfills the needs of the neighborhood? Why or why not?*
 - Over planned, over developed for my wishes and the wishes of the people I have talked with
 - NO. It fundamentally changes the character and feel of the neighborhood. There should be no concrete anywhere in the park and no playground
 - The so-called "improvements" - no. The native plants and restoration - yes. People who have chosen to live in this neighborhood have done so because being near "unimproved" nature is important to them. This is a unique and special place. People who want Leavittown or Livermore don't come here.
 - No, the need of the neighborhood is for an undeveloped meadow and creek ravine to keep it anchored in natural reality.
2. *Are there any important park features missing from the proposed concept plan?*
 - No, there are far too many park features in the proposed concept plan
 - Yes, a chance for our children to experience a "natural area", very important to us. Fox Hollow and Parker Elementary are easy to get to when we want a playground.
 - Yes! Respecting it's natural features!
 - Evening lighting??
3. *What is the most important park feature (that should be included no matter what)? List at least three of your highest priorities, in order of importance (1=most important).*
 - Leave it as is; leave it as is; leave it as is;
 - Reconstructing the entire running trail to improve drainage and preserve it; trash cans!!; narrow sidewalk
 - Natural processes remain intact
 - Protect & restore native meadow; preserve & enhance running trail; preserve & enhance existing woodland
4. *What is the least important park feature? List at least three of your highest priorities, in order of importance (1=least important).*
 - Small playground; concrete path through park; continue existing sidewalk
 - Concrete; playground; bridge
 - Concrete; playground; info panel
 - ADA accessible path thru park; playground; bridge
5. *Would you be interested in participating in a volunteer effort related to the park? What type? (Some possibilities might be tree and shrub planting and care, trail building, care of natural areas, park patrol, etc.)*

- Yes
- Yes - any trail and natural preservation work, trash pickup, planting
- I would be interested in participating in a volunteer effort to prevent development of the park

6. *Any other comments?*

- Leave the park as it is. This questionnaire is slanted toward assuming that the park should be developed: it shouldn't!
- I am worried about locating a playground right at the neck of a congested area which is also a bus stop. Sounds like a recipe for children to get hit. Please consider moving playground to area around Fox Hollow Rd, which is currently flat and unarticulated, with space for on-street parking.
- Please don't make our neighborhood like all those others where we chose not to live!